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SWAMP TERROR!

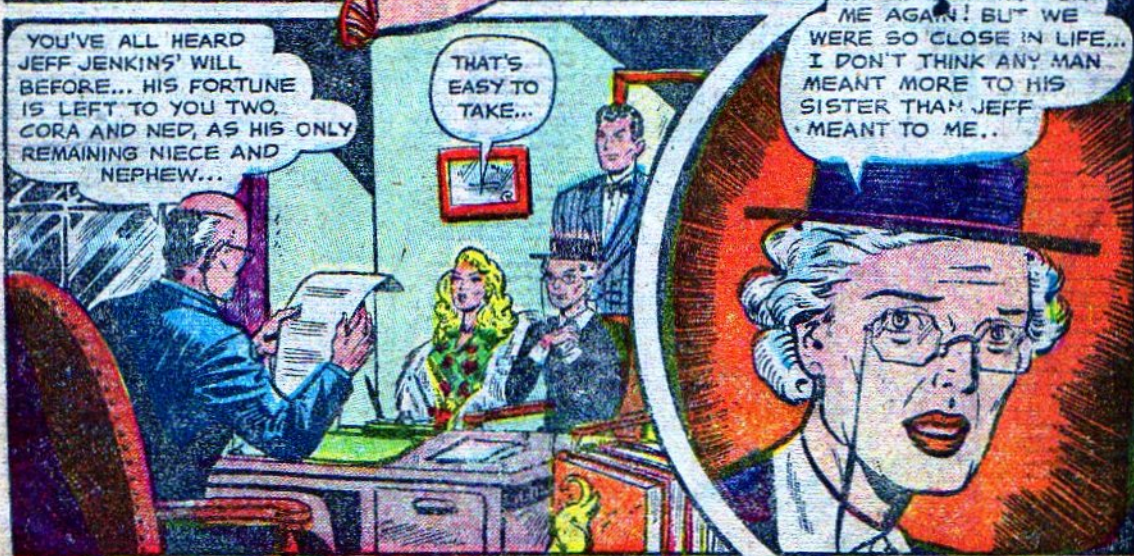
THIS IS THE TALE OF
A HORROR THAT BROODED
AND WAITED BENEATH A
SLIMY GURGLING ACRE OF
SWAMPLAND... AND OF A
DEAD MAN WHO FULFILLED
A CAREFULLY PLANNED
PLOT TO MURDER HIS
ENTIRE FAMILY FOR A VERY
SURPRISING REASON!

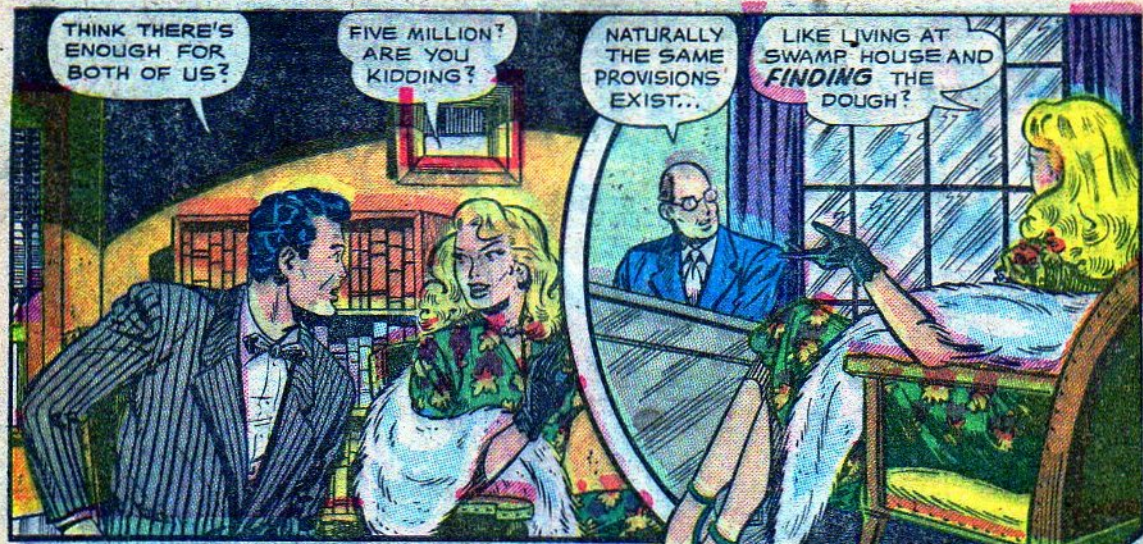


YOU'VE ALL HEARD
JEFF JENKINS' WILL
BEFORE... HIS FORTUNE
IS LEFT TO YOU TWO,
CORA AND NED, AS HIS ONLY
REMAINING NIECE AND
NEPHEW...

THAT'S
EASY TO
TAKE...

...AND NOTHING FOR
ME AGAIN! BUT WE
WERE SO CLOSE IN LIFE...
I DON'T THINK ANY MAN
MEANT MORE TO HIS
SISTER THAN JEFF
MEANT TO ME..



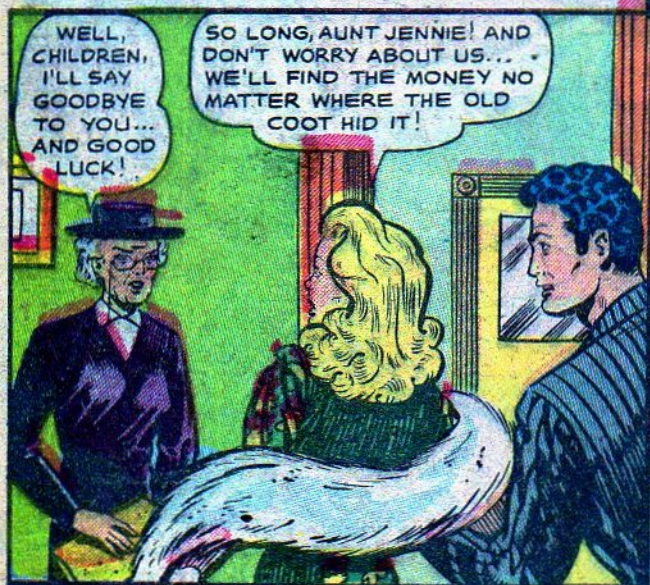


THINK THERE'S ENOUGH FOR BOTH OF US?

FIVE MILLION? ARE YOU KIDDING?

NATURALLY THE SAME PROVISIONS EXIST...

LIKE LIVING AT SWAMP HOUSE AND FINDING THE DOUGH?



WELL, CHILDREN, I'LL SAY GOODBYE TO YOU... AND GOOD LUCK!

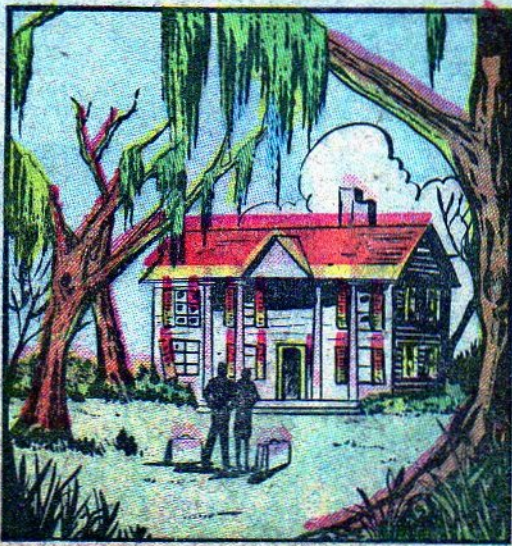
SO LONG, AUNT JENNIE! AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT US... WE'LL FIND THE MONEY NO MATTER WHERE THE OLD COOT HID IT!



GOODBYE, MY DEAR. I'M SORRY I DIDN'T HAVE BETTER NEWS FOR YOU TODAY!

JEFF WAS A KIND AND HONEST MAN, MR. RICE... WHATEVER HE WANTED DONE WITH HIS FORTUNE WAS HIS AFFAIR!

WITHIN DAYS, CORA AND NED JENKINS, HEIRS TO HIDDEN MILLIONS, MOVED TO THE FORMIDABLE ESTATE KNOWN AS SWAMP-HOUSE.



UGH! HOW MUCH DUST CAN A HOUSE HOLD?

FIRST THING WE'LL DO IS CONNECT THE PHONE!

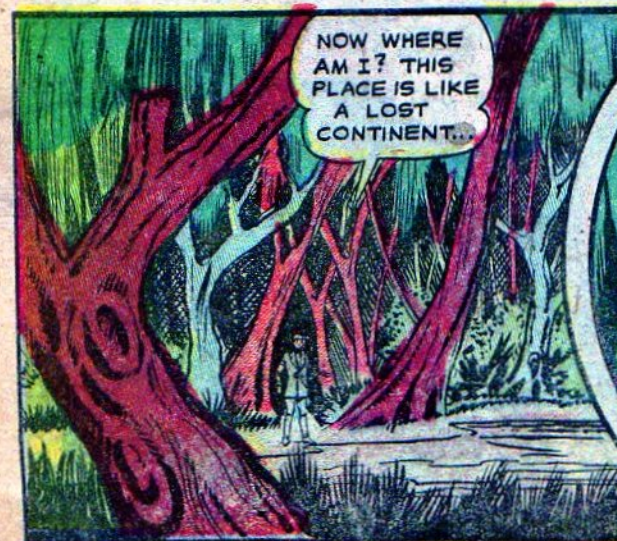
THE FIRST NIGHT UNDER SWAMPHOUSE'S DECAYING ROOF WAS NOT FOR SLEEPING... ALL THROUGHOUT THE DARKENED HOURS, HAUNTING MOANING SPLIT THE SILENCE... AND NERVOUSLY LISTENING, EACH COUSIN SUSPECTED THE OTHER OF TRYING TO FRIGHTEN HIM AWAY...

HOW'D YOU SLEEP, NED?

YOU MEAN HOW DID I SLEEP WITH THE SWAMP NOISES GOING ON ALL NIGHT?

ARE YOU GOING TO PRETEND YOU DIDN'T HEAR THEM? I'M GOING TO INVESTIGATE IT TODAY!

OH, I HEARD SOMETHING... BUT I DIDN'T PAY ANY ATTENTION TO IT...



NED
JENKINS
WAS INTENT
ON ESCAPING
FROM THE
SLIMY
SUCTION OF
THE FOUL
MUD-HOLE,
NEVER
REALIZING
THAT
BEHIND HIM
WAS LIVING
DEATH...

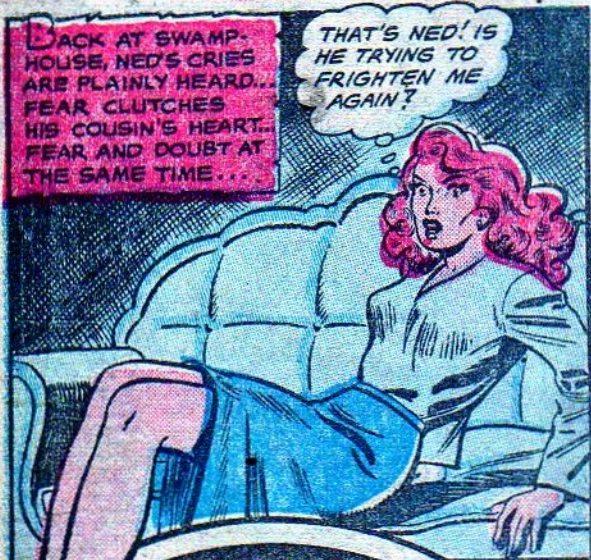


HELP! I'M NOT
SINKING... BEING
PULLED! HELP!
SOMEONE HELP ME!



BACK AT SWAMP-
HOUSE, NED'S CRIES
ARE PLAINLY HEARD...
FEAR CLUTCHES
HIS COUSIN'S HEART...
FEAR AND DOUBT AT
THE SAME TIME...

THAT'S NED! IS
HE TRYING TO
FRIGHTEN ME
AGAIN?

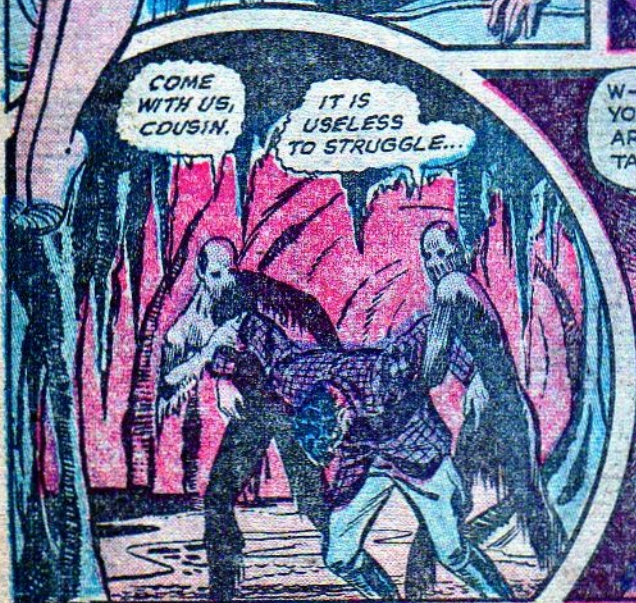


BUT CORA WAS WRONG... NED WAS
BEYOND FRIGHTENING ANYONE...



COME
WITH US,
COUSIN.

IT IS
USELESS
TO STRUGGLE...



W-WHO ARE
YOU? WHERE
ARE YOU
TAKING ME?



NED WAS HALF LED, HALF DRAGGED INTO A DARK CHAMBER AND THERE BEFORE HIM ON A THRONE-LIKE AFFAIR SAT A WRETCHED HUMAN FORM... AS NED STARED IN TOTAL HORROR, IT BEGAN TO SPEAK...

STEP CLOSER. MY EYES HAVE LITTLE STRENGTH LEFT. YOU ARE A JENKINS... ANOTHER MONEY-MAD JENKINS... BUT YOU ARE FINISHED NOW... YOU HAVE JOINED YOUR CLANSMEN...



YES, I AM YOUR UNCLE JEFF JENKINS. MY MONEY WAS COVETED BY YOU ALL... BUT I HAVE REMOVED YOU ONE BY ONE...



LET ME OUT OF HERE!

THERE IS NO ESCAPE. YOU BELONG TO THE SWAMP NOW AND FOREVER...



FIGHTING WITH THE STRENGTH OF TEN MEN, NED TRIED TO BREAK AWAY FROM THE SLIMY CREATURES THAT WERE ONCE MEN, BUT IT WAS OF NO AVAIL... HE WAS PUSHED BODILY INTO A CELL-LIKE PIT...

Y—YOU MEAN ALL THE OTHERS WHO INHERITED YOUR MONEY ARE HERE?

ALL OF THEM... THEY WANTED MONEY MORE THAN LIFE... NOW THEY HAVE NEITHER... GO... JOIN THEM...



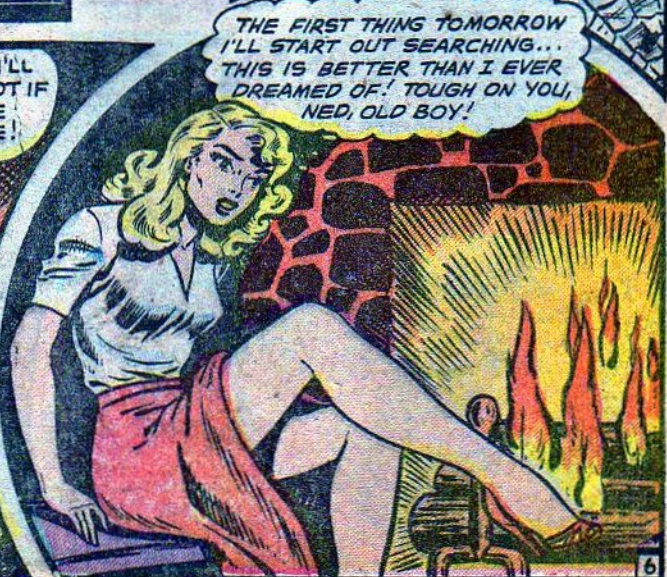
THIS CAN'T BE TRUE! I'VE LOST MY MIND! I'VE GONE MAD... MAD LIKE THEY ARE...



AFTER WAITING HOURS FOR NED TO RETURN, CORA FINALLY BEGAN TO SEARCH FOR HIM... SLOWLY AND CAUTIOUSLY SHE APPROACHED THE SWAMP...



WITHOUT A THOUGHT OF NED'S GRIM FINISH, CORA RUSHED TO SWAMP-HOUSE AND EXCITEDLY PUT IN A LONG DISTANCE CALL TO THE FAMILY ATTORNEY...







BUT THERE WAS NO LIVING SOUL TO HEAR THE SHRIEKS OF TERROR OR THE BECKONING CRIES FOR HELP...

SOMETHING'S PULLING ME! I MUST TRY TO GET AWAY...



NO! NO! I DON'T WANT TO DIE! I WANT TO LIVE... MY MONEY...



THE LAST OF THE JENKINS! OUR WORK IS COMPLETE!

LET ME GO! W—WHO ARE YOU? LET-ME GO, YOU DEVILS!



AND NOW THE CYCLE HAS COMPLETED ITSELF... RESIGN TO YOUR FATE, CORA JENKINS...



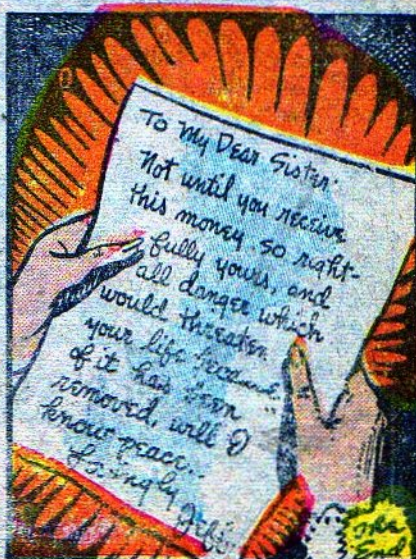
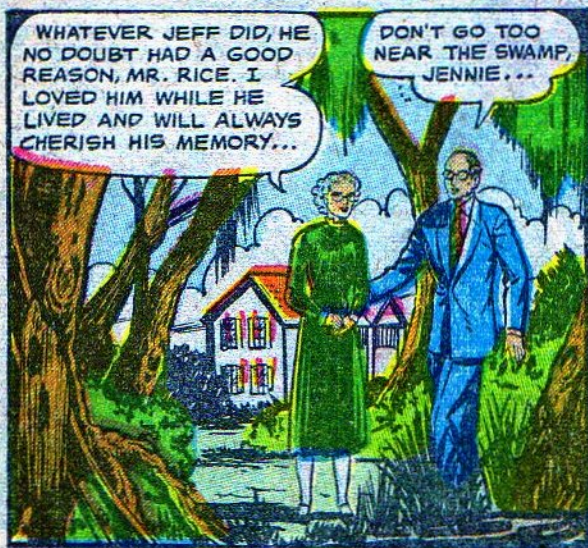
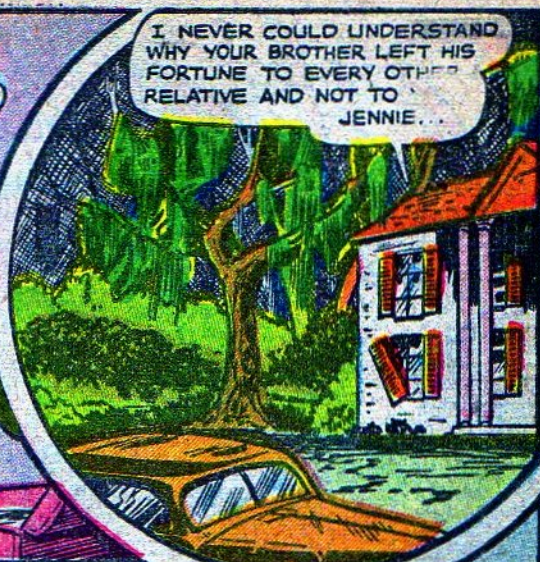
DAZED, HARDLY REALIZING THAT HER FEET WERE MOVING, CORA WAS LED OFF TO JOIN THE WEIRD GROUP OF CREATURES THAT LIKE HERSELF, HAD ONCE LOVED MONEY MORE THAN LIFE...

YOU, ABOVE ALL HAVE WE WAITED FOR, COUSIN...



YES, FOR NOW WE CAN DIE... ALL OF US...

MILES
AWAY FROM
THE MACABRE
SWAMP SCENE,
ATTORNEY
RICE QUIETLY
EXPLAINS
MANY FACTS
TO A GENTLE-
FACED WOMAN...
JENNIE
JENKINS...
THE LAST
LIVING
MEMBER OF
THE STRANGE
FAMILY...



Chamber of DOOM!

EACH DAY SHE STOOD AT THE WINDOW SMILING AT THE YOUNG MAN WHO PASSED, BUT MINGLED WITH THE LOVE IN HER EYES WAS DEATH!

YEARS AFTER HIS DEPARTURE FROM THE VILLAGE OF WHITECLIFF, PAUL AMES FINALLY RETURNS HOME AND IS GREETED AT THE DEPOT BY HIS TWIN, PETER AMES.

WE'LL TAKE THE WEST ROAD, PAUL...

BUT WHY, WHEN GREEN STREET CUTS OUR DISTANCE IN HALF?

YOU'RE RIGHT, OF COURSE, BUT I AVOID GREEN STREET! SILLY OF ME, I KNOW... BUT THERE WAS A GIRL THERE... A ROSA WELLS... I... WELL, FRANKLY I JILTED HER! SHE DIED SOON AFTER... AND AS GOSSIPS WOULD HAVE IT, SHE TOOK HER OWN LIFE BECAUSE OF ME!

FUNNY... PETER SOUNDS PROUD OF IT!



THE SMILING MAIDEN MADE SO DEEP AN IMPRESSION ON PAUL AMES, HE FOUND HIMSELF UNABLE TO THINK OF ANYTHING BUT HER LOVELINESS... AND EACH DAY HE HURRIED TO GREEN STREET IN HOPES OF SEEING HER... AND ODDLY ENOUGH, HE WAS DAILY REWARDED...



... BUT AGAIN THE SIGHT OF THE MYSTERIOUS GIRL MADE PAUL UNABLE TO SPEAK OF THE STRANGE LOVE THAT SMOLDERED WITHIN HIM...



I CAN'T GO ON THIS WAY... SHE SPEAKS TO ME WITH HER EYES... THEY TELL ME SHE DESIRES TO KNOW ME... RESPECTABLE OR NOT, TOMORROW EVENING I'LL SPEAK TO HER!



THE FOLLOWING DAY, PAUL MECHANICALLY ACCOMPLISHED WORK, YET HIS HEART AND MIND FEVERISHLY AWAITED DUSK AND THE UNKNOWN LADY IN THE WINDOW... BUT WHEN HE FINALLY ARRIVED AT HER RESIDENCE...



SHE'S NOT THERE! BUT THIS IS THE FIRST TIME... I MUST SEE HER... I'M DETERMINED...

AS PAUL MOUNTED THE STONE STEPS, A FEELING OF APPREHENSION CAME OVER HIM... A SINISTER SILENCE LIKE THAT ENVELOPING A TOMB BREATHED FORTH FROM THE CHAMBER OF MYSTERY...



H—HELLO... MAY I ENTER?

GOOD GRIEF! S—SHE'S BEEN MURDERED!



SICK WITH SHOCK AND HORROR, PAUL RUSHED TO HIS HOME AND RELATED THE ENTIRE EXPERIENCE TO HIS TWIN...

GREEN STREET! WHY DIDN'T YOU GO TO THE POLICE?

BECAUSE I CAN'T BELIEVE IT, PETER! YOU MUST COME WITH ME... TELL ME IF WHAT I SAW WAS REAL!



TO APPEASE HIS TWIN'S MAD RAVING, PETER RELUCTANTLY ACCOMPANIED HIM TO THE STREET HE HAD SO LONG AVOIDED... AND...

YOU HAVE HAD A STRANGE ROMANTIC DREAM, PAUL! I THINK YOU'VE IMAGINED IT ALL!

NO... I SAW HER! THE BEAUTIFUL GIRL... AND THE DAGGER... COME AND SEE FOR YOURSELF!



SHE'S IN HERE...

HERE! THIS IS WHERE ROSA LIVED!



KNOWING IT WAS SHEER COINCIDENCE, YET COLD WITH FEAR, PETER LET HIMSELF BE DRAGGED INTO THE VERY CHAMBER WHEREIN ROSA WELLS ONCE ABIDED...

NOW WHERE IS YOUR MURDERED MAIDEN, PAUL?

GONE! BUT SHE WAS HERE IN THIS VERY SPOT! I TELL YOU I SAW HER BODY!

IF YOU WEREN'T SO UPSET, I'D ACCUSE YOU OF TRYING TO PLAY A GRIM PRANK ON ME, PAUL! THIS WAS ROSA'S CHAMBER... NOW LET'S GO HOME!

I COULDN'T HAVE IMAGINED IT... I SAW HER... I LOVED HER AND NOW... NOW I DON'T UNDERSTAND...

PERHAPS YOU'VE BEEN WORKING TOO HARD HERE, PAUL. A TRIP TO THE CITY AGAIN MAY DO YOU GOOD...

SHE WAS SO FAIR... SO YOUNG... SO LONELY LOOKING...

...YOU ARE RIGHT, PETER... I'LL GO AWAY AGAIN... AWAY FROM GREEN STREET...

GOOD! NOW WHY DON'T YOU RETIRE, PAUL? YOU LOOK EXHAUSTED...

THE GIRL HE SPOKE OF FIT ROSA'S DESCRIPTION PERFECTLY... BUT SHE IS DEAD... IT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN ROSA...

FEARFUL DOUBTS THAT MADE NO SENSE RACED ABOUT PETER'S BRAIN... HE REACHED INTO HIS JACKET POCKET FOR HIS PIPE TO RELAX HIS THOUGHTS, BUT INSTEAD HIS FINGERS CLOSED ON A TINY METALLIC OBJECT...

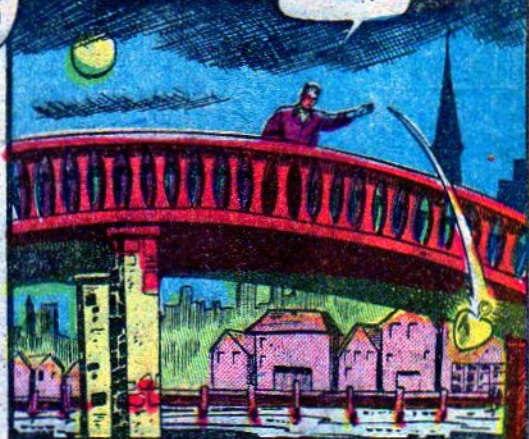
ROSA'S LOCKET! THE ONE GIFT I EVER GAVE HER! BUT HOW... HOW DO I COME TO HAVE IT NOW?

THE NIGHT WAS SLEEPLESS FOR BOTH BROTHERS. AND IN THE DARKNESS, DECISIONS WERE BEING MADE... PAUL TO LEAVE TOWN FOREVER, AND PETER TO REMAIN SILENT ABOUT THE WEIRD APPEARANCE OF THE LOCKET...

GOODBYE, PETER... AND IF YOU EVER HEAR OF ANY... ANY EXPLANATION OF LAST NIGHT...

YOU KNOW I'D CONTACT YOU IMMEDIATELY, PAUL... YOU'D BETTER BOARD YOUR TRAIN NOW...

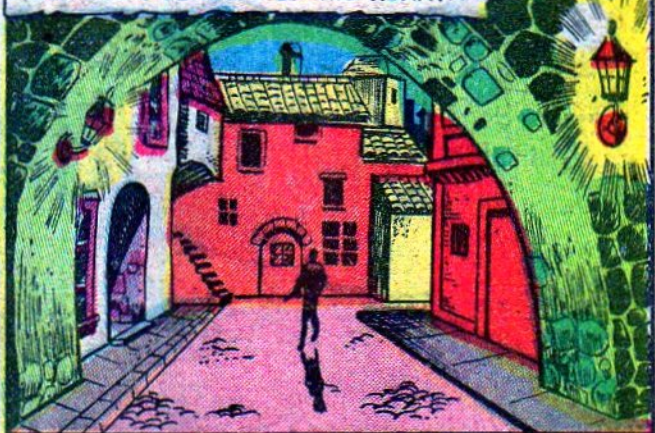
...THERE ARE SOME THINGS BEST LEFT UNEXPLAINED! I WANT NO MORE OF YOU, ROSA WELLS! I NEVER DID WANT YOU!



I'M NOT AFRAID OF GREEN STREET ANY LONGER... AND TO PROVE IT, I'M GOING TO WALK HOME THAT WAY...



DEFYING AN UNKNOWN CHALLENGE, PETER STALKED DOWN THE LANE KNOWN AS GREEN STREET... HIS FOOTSTEPS TATTOOED A MELANCHOLY CLATTER ON THE ANCIENT COBBLESTONES, KEEPING MEASURE WITH THE POUNDING OF HIS HEART...



A CANDLE! THEN THERE IS SOMEONE IN THERE! YOU ARE IN THERE, ROSA!



...ROSA'S WINDOW LOOMED INTO VIEW, ITS BLANK PANE GIVING NO SIGN OF LIFE WITHIN... BUT A SUDDEN SPUTTERING LIGHT TOLD ANOTHER STORY!

...AND I WILL GO IN, TOO! I WILL FINISH THIS NIGHTMARE FOREVER, MY BONNIE MAID!



PETER
THREW THE
DOOR OPEN,
BUT
INSTANTLY
HIS
CONFIDENCE
VANISHED...
THERE WAS
NO LIGHT
WITHIN THE
ROOM...THERE
WASN'T
EVEN A
CANDLE
BURNING
IN THE
SHADOWY
INTERIOR...

BUT THIS CAN'T BE...
I SAW THE CANDLE
WITH MY OWN EYES!



HARDLY REALIZING WHAT HE DID, PETER
ENTERED THE MUSTY ROOM, AND AS IF
PRE-PLANNED, THE HEAVY DOOR SWUNG
SHUT BEHIND HIM...

THE DOOR!
I-I'M NOT
ALONE IN
THIS
CHAMBER!



ROSA! NO...
YOU'RE NOT REAL...
I DON'T BELIEVE
IT... KEEP AWAY...

MY LOCKET, PETER...
I SHOULDN'T HAVE
GIVEN IT TO YOU...
I WANT IT AGAIN...

I WANT TO LOOK MY
BEST SO YOU'LL LOVE
ME, PETER... I MUST
HAVE MY LOCKET...
PLEASE...

NO! KEEP
AWAY, I
TELL
YOU!



I DON'T HAVE
THAT CURSED
LOCKET! I
THREW IT
AWAY!

BUT I MUST
HAVE IT... IT
WAS THE ONLY
GIFT YOU EVER
GAVE ME...

A' SCREAM ECHOED DOWN GREEN STREET...A
CRY OF DEADLY TERROR THAT ROUSED THE TOWNS-
FOLK FROM THEIR HONEST SLUMBER...IT WAS HOURS
BEFORE PETER AMES WAS FINALLY LOCATED, AND
THEN HE WAS FAR BEYOND ANY EARTHLY AID...

THIS IS THE
SECOND STRANGE
DEATH IN THIS
ROOM!

YOU WOULDN'T THINK
THAT BIT OF RIBBON
TWISTED ABOUT HIS
NECK WOULD BE
ENOUGH TO KILL
HIM, NOW WOULD
YOU?



The
End

PERILOUS PACT

By JOHN MARTIN

AT THE phone, Luigi chafed impatiently. From the other end of the wire came Bianca's words, pleading, pathetic.

"You have forgotten me, Luigi. I know you have. I know you have!"

Luigi stood there, scowling into the mouthpiece of the phone. It was hard to know what to say.

"I have seen you with Carla, Luigi. But, Luigi, you promised yourself to me!"

Still he said nothing. He ground his teeth. It was difficult, almost impossible, to reason with a woman. Even Carla, he knew, was difficult. Besides, he knew truth was on Bianca's side. But it had all happened so long ago!

"Look, Bianca," he said finally. "What happened when we were children can't matter to us now that we're grown. You can see that, can't you?" He hesitated. There was silence on the other end. He glanced impatiently at his wrist-watch. He had a date, he knew — not with Carla, but with a warehouse safe and a gun. "Bianca . . ." he began again. Then, he heard a click in the phone. She had hung up.

Breathing a sigh of relief, Luigi slammed the phone back on its base, picked up his hat, glanced carefully in the mirror and took the gun out of his bureau drawer. Instantly, as a knock sounded on the door, a stab of fear shot through him. He shot the weapon into his shoulder holster.

"Come in," he said softly. In the slums a man had to speak quietly. Death might lie at the end of a sharp word.

The door opened and Guiseppe Barto, Bianca's brother, stood there. Like Luigi, he was a little over twenty-one, built slender and wiry, with dark, intense eyes, black wavy hair. He walked into Luigi's room.

"You will not marry Bianca as you promised?" he asked quietly.

"I just spoke to . . ." Luigi began and stopped, a chill hand laying itself on his heart. How could Guiseppe know he had finally refused his sister? It had been only a moment . . .

"How did you know?" he said, tremulously.

Guiseppe smiled, his mouth tightening.

"I knew," he said. "It is not easy to hide things from me, Luigi. You knew that when we were boys. And, when we were boys did we not both sign a pact of friendship in blood? Did we not swear to be friends, for-

ever? Did you not swear to marry none other than my sister, Bianca? Now you have taken up with Carla!" He spat in derision.

Luigi shuddered. He knew how seriously the slums took such pacts. But he also knew he had grown away from the slums and their petty crimes. Guiseppe was still a stealer of trifles, as he had been when a boy. But Luigi — inwardly, Luigi smiled — had joined the bigger rackets. Now he even enjoyed the protection of the local political boss. As he remembered that, his courage came back. He sneered at Guiseppe.

"What shall a boy's act mean to a man?" he demanded. He shook his head. "I am sorry, Guiseppe — and I mean no harm — but I am a man now, as you are. I want Carla, not Bianca! And I mean to live my own life, not the cheap life of these slums!"

Guiseppe's face paled. His eyes snapped dangerously.

"You know the price of a broken oath among our people?" he asked.

"I know — the vendetta."

"The vendetta! And you take it so calmly!"

"Because the vendetta is childish here in America," Luigi said. "It is silly, inefficient. It wastes good blood — as I once wasted blood myself." His eyelids lifted in sardonic amusement.

"The vendetta, then!" Guiseppe ground out. He turned on his heel and slunk out the door.

FOR AWHILE, Luigi stared after him, a look of bravado on his face, but a worm of horror growing in his heart. Perhaps he had gone too far, he thought. But no . . . there were rumors about Guiseppe's family, bad rumors even here in the slums, things dark and sinister that were only hinted at. At first, when they both were boys, Luigi had ignored them, for Guiseppe and Bianca were ever his close friends, but the rumors persisted, though he could make neither head nor tail of them. It was as he had always thought — he had grown away from the older things. This was America, in 1934, not dark, haunt-ridden Central Europe. Here the sun shone and at night the streets, brightly lit, kept the terror of the gloomy hours at bay.

It was best, he decided, that he have no contact with them. Besides, he knew where

to seek protection. A word from him and Guiseppe could be silenced. Outside it was getting dark. He felt for the security of the gun in its shoulder holster, went downstairs and out the door.

Down slum streets strewn with garbage, alive with raucous humanity, Luigi passed quietly. In the distance loomed the warehouse he had planned to rob, far down on the waterfront. From rumors he knew the old safe in its main office was easier to open than a tin can — and that it held a juicy \$25,000 in small bills.

The streets became more and more deserted as he neared the waterfront and the warehouse. The street lamps were soon almost drowned in the haze drifting in from off the bay. Quickly circling the building, he made a rapid survey. There was no one behind him. He had almost half-expected Guiseppe to have followed him. But there was no one. Two blocks away, a cop passed around a corner and was lost to view.

Luigi darted into the shadow of an alley. Travelling it quickly, he came to a loading platform with a door leading from it into the warehouse. Often, while casing the job, he had seen the night watchman let himself in by that door. His heart pounding, he tried it. It swung open. Luigi let himself into the dark interior, flattening against the wall. He knew precisely where the office was — down the corridor and fifty feet to the left. Drawing his gun he made his way down the darkened corridor until he came to the bend in the passage. At its end was the office door. Stopping, he listened. There wasn't a sound. Luigi grinned crookedly. He would have no trouble opening the safe. To a man as skilled as he was, only time was important. He would have plenty of time to listen to the fall of the tumblers.

Abruptly, he headed down the bend of the corridor. At that moment the office door opened. Luigi froze, his thoughts exploding. The watchman!

ONCE, TWICE, Luigi's gun barked. The watchman fell against the door as the thunder of the weapon echoed and re-echoed. Lying on the floor he fumbled in his jacket. Luigi paused, irresolute. Then he whirled as the other fired. An icy, numbing shock smashed down his neck. A sickening flood of warm red blood followed. With terror, Luigi knew his jugular vein had been nicked — not severed, but cut badly enough to allow him to bleed to death quickly. Outside a distant police whistle sounded. Summoning his strength he ran to the loading platform, dodged down an alley and kept running until the warehouse was blocks behind. Then he changed course and ran across town.

It was at the corner of a slum alley that Luigi faltered. He saw the street wobble in

front of him, then rise up like the further end of a see-saw. For one long moment he tried to stay erect. He tottered forward a few yards, then began crumpling. Before he blacked out, he started thinking: *They'll find me. They'll know I was shot. I'll hang, or I'll burn. I'll hang or I'll burn.* Then oblivion came.

The first sound he heard when he woke was a calm, friendly voice:

"Feeling better? You're all right now."

He opened his eyes. He was in a hospital room. The nurse smiled.

"You almost died. Looked like you tore your jugular vein on a nail. Fortunately, someone found you. You were rushed to the hospital. A friend donated blood."

So he wasn't connected with the warehouse shooting. Luigi closed his eyes for a moment in silent thanksgiving. He'd gotten away with it. But who was the friend who had given him his blood?

"Yeah, yeah," he muttered. "It was an accident. You — you say a friend gave me his blood?"

"Yes, he's waiting to see you," the nurse said and went outside.

A moment later, Luigi's eyes widened with shock as Guiseppe and Bianca came into the room. The nurse left, closing the door behind her.

Guiseppe came close to the bed. Both his and Bianca's eyes burned deeply like coals. They stared down at Luigi. Luigi shuddered as Guiseppe laughed. With deep sarcasm Guiseppe began to speak.

"I hope you will not mind. I came as a friend after I had heard about the 'accident' to give you blood."

"As a friend?" Luigi gasped. "But the vendetta . . . !"

"The vendetta is over," Guiseppe said. "I made sure of that by putting my blood in your veins. Yes, you will marry Bianca, now. You will be one of us. You will have to be one of us, Luigi — or you will starve to death. Only we can protect you."

"One — one of *you*?" Luigi asked, brokenly.

"You have, no doubt, heard of the rumors about my family?" Guiseppe continued. "Yes, you have heard. Well, they are true, Luigi. We are a family of vampires. And now, with my blood in your veins — you are a vampire, too!"

Bianca gently took one of Luigi's hands and began to caress it. He stared up at her, knowing what would be his terrible lot now: the long, endless thirst of the living dead that only fresh warm blood could quench. Then, Luigi began to laugh insanely. What a joke! Yes, he would marry her. He would be tied to her forever, for Bianca would know where warm, fresh blood could be obtained.

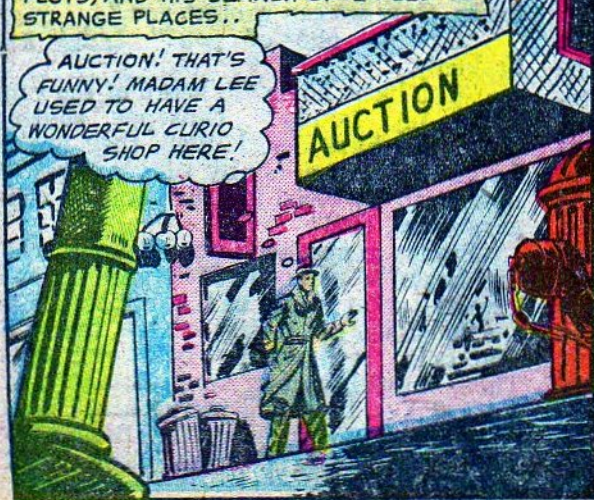
The HAUNTED HAND!

ONCE IT WAS TAUGHT
TO MURDER AND NOW
THAT WAS ALL IT KNEW
HOW TO DO!



FRANK FEY, FAMOUS MYSTERY STORY WRITER,
WAS ALWAYS ON THE ALERT FOR POSSIBLE
PLOTS, AND HIS SEARCH OFTEN LED TO
STRANGE PLACES..

AUCTION! THAT'S
FUNNY! MADAM LEE
USED TO HAVE A
WONDERFUL CURIO
SHOP HERE!



AND NOW THE BIDDING WILL START ON THE
EFFECTS OF THE LATE MADAM LEE!
PERHAPS SOME OF YOU KNEW THE
FAMOUS PROPRIETRESS WHO PRACTICED
HER SORCERY RIGHT HERE IN THIS
VERY SHOP...

MADAM LEE
DEAD! I
DIDN'T
KNOW THAT!



FRANK FEY
WELL
REMEMBERED
THE UNUSUAL
COLLECTION
OF CHARMS
AND ODDITIES
THAT ONCE
GRACED THIS
SHOP... INDEED
IT WAS THIS
VERY FACT
THAT BROUGHT
HIM THERE
THAT
EVENING...
FOR INSTANCE,
THERE WAS
THE HAND...



"BLOODY JOHN," THIEF AND MURDERER... EXECUTED A CENTURY AGO! THINK I'LL LOOK UP HIS HISTORY AND SEE IF I CAN WANGLE A STORY OUT OF IT! OF COURSE I DIDN'T HAVE TO BUY THIS HAND JUST TO DO THAT...



GUESS IT WAS A FOOLISH PURCHASE! MOST OF MY FRIENDS WOULD SHIVER TO LOOK AT IT!



...NOW THAT GIVES ME A VERY FUNNY IDEA! I COULD USE THIS HAND IN PLACE OF THAT BROKEN KNOCKER...



I'M GOING TO HAVE A PARTY TOMORROW NIGHT, "BLOODY JOHN," AND YOU'RE GOING TO SHAKE HANDS WITH MY GUESTS... IF THEY CAN STAND THE UGLY SIGHT OF YOU! I THINK YOU MAKE A VERY CLEVER DOOR KNOCKER!



THE UNUSUAL WAS EXPECTED OF FRANK FEY, BUT THE SIGHT OF HIS GORY NEW DOOR-KNOCKER CREATED A HORRIFYING SENSATION AMONG HIS GUESTS THE FOLLOWING NIGHT...

DARLING, IT'S NOT AT ALL FUNNY! IT'S TERRIFYING! PLEASE TAKE IT DOWN!

YOU'RE ALL A PACK OF SISSIES! COME... I'LL SHOW YOU SOMETHING!

P-PLEASE, FRANK! DON'T!

THIS HAND HAS BEEN DEAD FOR A WHOLE CENTURY! LOOK... IF I BURN IT, DOES IT MOVE? IT'S JUST A MUMMIFIED HAND, THAT'S ALL!

BUT IT'S NOT RIGHT TO MAKE FUN OF A DEAD HAND, NO MATTER HOW OLD IT IS! WHY DON'T YOU GET RID OF IT, DEAR?

I' LOVE YOU, JILL, BUT SOMETIMES YOU ACT A BIT PULL! NOW FORGET THE HAND AND LET'S HAVE SOME FUN!

IF FRANK FEY NOTICED THAT THE EVENING WAS STRAINED AND HIS GUESTS UNCOMFORTABLE, HE NEVER BOTHERED TO SHOW IT... EVEN WHEN THEY DEPARTED EARLIER THAN USUAL...

SO LONG, FOLKS! COME AGAIN.

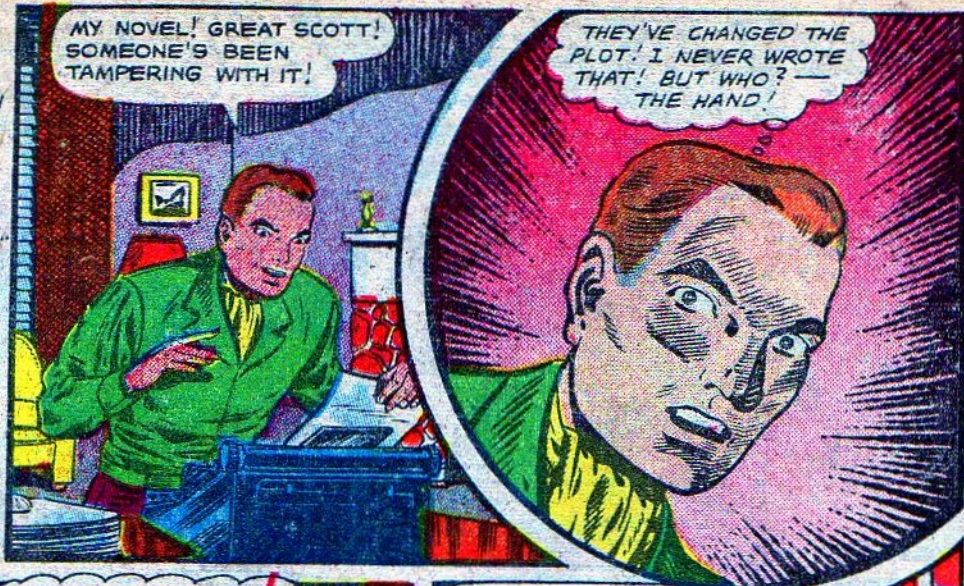
...AND ANOTHER THING UNNOTICED... THE LAST SLAM OF THE DOOR WRENCHED THE HAND LOOSE FROM THE INADEQUATE NAILS AND IT FELL FREE TO THE PORCH...

BAH! EVEN PARTIES CAN GET MONOTONOUS! OUT GO THE LIGHTS, AND SO TO BED!

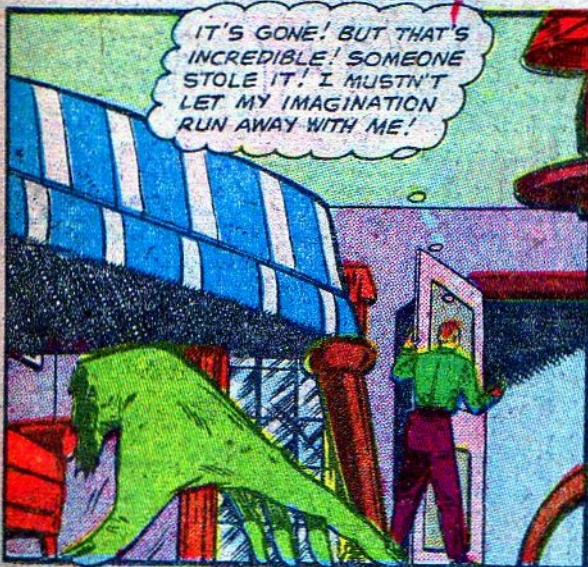
THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT, FRANK FEY SLEPT SOUNDLY WITHOUT ANOTHER THOUGHT OF THE HAND OR ITS UGLY PAST... DREADFUL PRESENT... OR TERRIFYING FUTURE... IT WASN'T UNTIL THE NEXT DAY THAT HE KNEW ANYTHING WAS AMISS...

MY NOVEL! GREAT SCOTT! SOMEONE'S BEEN TAMPERING WITH IT!

THEY'VE CHANGED THE PLOT. I NEVER WROTE THAT! BUT WHO? — THE HAND!



IT'S GONE! BUT THAT'S INCREDIBLE! SOMEONE STOLE IT! I MUSTN'T LET MY IMAGINATION RUN AWAY WITH ME!



NO... NO ONE WOULD STEAL IT! THEY WERE ALL AFRAID OF IT... I MUST FIND IT... IT'S GOT TO BE AROUND SOMEPLACE!



DRAT IT! THAT MUST BE JILL! SHE WOULD STOP IN TO VISIT AT A TIME LIKE THIS!



YOU'LL HAVE TO TURN THAT HAND OVER TO US, MR. FEY. IT'S AGAINST THE LAW TO HAVE SUCH A THING IN YOUR POSSESSION... FOR PURPOSES OF AMUSEMENT!

AMUSEMENT!



THE POLICE WERE INVITED INTO FEY'S HOME WHILE HE OFFERED A FLIMSY EXPLANATION OF MISPLACING THE HAND AND A SOLEMN PROMISE TO RELINQUISH IT WHEN IT WAS LOCATED... BUT AFTER THE AUTHORITIES LEFT...

THE CONTENTS OF THEIR POCKETS! THE HAND REMOVED THEM... AND WE DIDN'T EVEN SEE IT!



I'VE GOT TO FIND THAT MONSTROUS THING BEFORE SOMETHING MORE SERIOUS HAPPENS!



ONCE AGAIN WAS THE SEARCH FOR "BLOODY JOHN'S" HAND INTERRUPTED... THIS TIME BY FRANK FEY'S FIANCEE... RATHER THAN ALARM THE GIRL WITH THE NEWS OF THE HAND, HE TRIED TO AVOID THE SUBJECT...

FRANK, I INSIST ON KNOWING WHERE THE HAND IS!



...DON'T YOU SEE, DARLING, IT'S AN EVIL HAND! IT'S DANGEROUS...AND... AND I HATE IT!

ARE YOU GOING TO BE CHILDISH AGAIN JILL? FORGET THAT HAND!

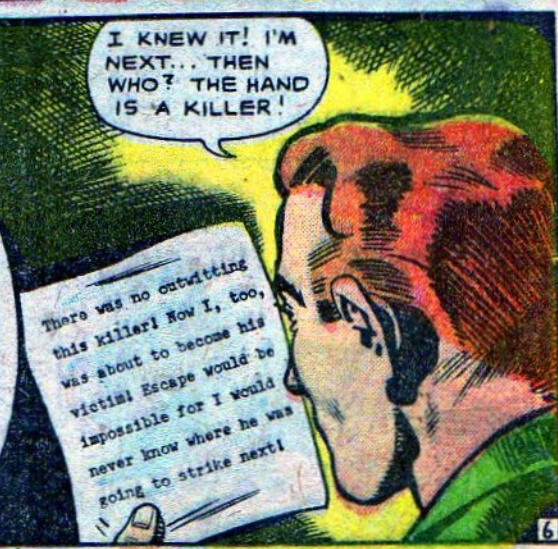


THE SHRILL SIGNAL OF THE PHONE CHOSE THAT VERY MOMENT TO SUMMON FRANK FROM THE ROOM...

...ER...YES, OFFICER. I KNOW! HAVE THE STUFF...IT'S SAFE... NO... NO, I HAVEN'T...

SOMETHING DREADEFUL IS GOING ON ABOUT THAT HAND, I KNOW... I CAN FEEL IT... DANGER...





FRANTICALLY FEY SHOWED THE NOTE TO THE SKEPTICAL POLICE... NOT ONLY DID THEY WONDER ABOUT THE BIZARRE CASE, BUT THEY WERE BEGINNING TO DOUBT FEY'S SANITY...

SEE FOR YOURSELF! I MUST HAVE PROTECTION! IT'LL KILL ME FOR CERTAIN!

...STAY WITH HIM A FEW HOURS, MIKE...

YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT NOW... I'M ARMED, BUT BE QUIET FOR A WHILE, WILL YOU, FELLOW?



HE DOESN'T BELIEVE ME! NONE OF THEM DO! THEY PROBABLY THINK I MURDERED JILL MYSELF! HOW CAN HE SLEEP LIKE THAT? IF HE ONLY KNEW THE HAND LIKE I DO?

... HAND... CAN'T CRY OUT! C-CAN'T SEEM TO MOVE... LIKE A NIGHTMARE... OH, HELP ME, SOMEONE... HELP ME...



EVEN WITH HIS FRANTIC STRUGGLING, THERE WAS NO RIDING THE HAND HELD OVER HIS FACE, SHUTTING OFF BREATH... FINALLY FRANK FEY'S HEAD WAS SMASHED AGAINST THE MARBLE MANTLE, AND WITHOUT A SINGLE CRY, HE SPRAWLED TO THE FLOOR, INERT.. LIFELESS...

... BUT THE HAND, SPREAD IN EVIL TRIUMPH, WAS UNEXPECTEDLY SWEEPED DOWNWARD BY ITS VICTIM'S DEATH-FALL, AND THE LICKING FLAMES LEAPED OUT... GRASPING... CONSUMING... DESTROYING... YET HARDLY AUDIBLE IN THE ROOM OF SHADOWS AND DOOM...



PLANET WITHOUT DEATH...

...BUT THERE WAS A SECRET ON THIS PLANET CALLED CHOLORS THAT WAS MORE TO BE FEARED THAN DOOM ITSELF!

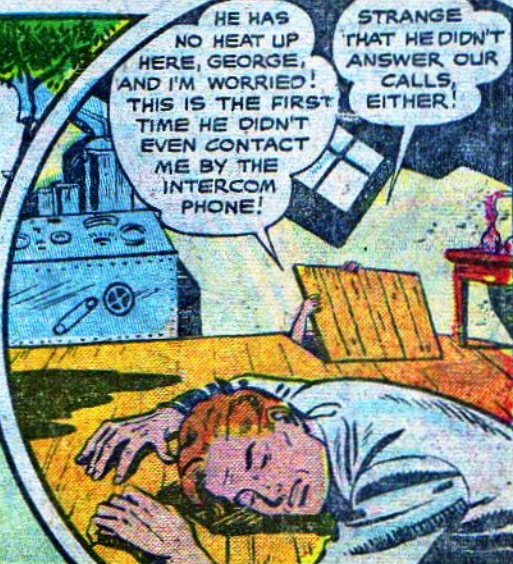


THE DOME LABORATORY IN THE SUBURBS OF WESTFIELD CITY WAS HEADQUARTERS FOR KIP GRANT'S PLANETARY EXPLORATION WORK... ONE TIME HE ISOLATED HIMSELF FROM HIS FAMILY FOR THREE DAYS, UNTIL FINALLY THEY DECIDED TO INVADE HIS CHAMBER...



HE HAS NO HEAT UP HERE, GEORGE, AND I'M WORRIED! THIS IS THE FIRST TIME HE DIDN'T EVEN CONTACT ME BY THE INTERCOM PHONE!

STRANGE THAT HE DIDN'T ANSWER OUR CALLS, EITHER!



NOT EVEN A STUDENT OF SCIENCE IS IMMUNE TO PHYSICAL WEAKNESS... KIP GRANT HAD OVER-WORKED IN UNHEATED QUARTERS... HIS WIFE AND BROTHER DISCOVERED HIM GRAVELY ILL... TOO ILL TO HOPE FOR RECOVERY...

I'M SORRY MRS. GRANT, BUT THERE ISN'T ANYTHING MORE I CAN DO...

YOU'VE JUST GOT TO GET WELL, KIP!



IT ISN'T EASY TO BEAR, I KNOW, BUT YOU MUST BE BRAVE, MRS. GRANT!

OH, NO, DOCTOR! Y-YOU MEAN... BUT HE CAN'T... HE CAN'T...



WHAT CAN I DO? OH, KIP...

MARY... NO DEATH ON CHOLORS PLANET... I KNOW... I'VE STUDIED IT FOR MONTHS... ROCKET ME OFF... I'D HAVE A CHANCE THERE...



MARY'S HUSBAND WAS DYING... ANY CHANCE TO SAVE HIM WAS WORTH TRYING, NO MATTER HOW FANTASTIC... WITHIN AN HOUR PREPARATIONS WERE UNDER WAY TO ROCKET HIM OFF THE EARTH...

HE PROMISED TO SEND ME A SIGN IF HE MAKES IT...

IF, MARY... IF...



WITH A DEAFENING ROAR OF POWER, THE GIANT ROCKET, AND ITS CREW OF ONE, CHARGES SKYWARD IN A BURST OF SUPERSONIC SPEED...

HE'D BETTER GET ABOARD, MARY. I'LL START THE CONTROLS AND HELP YOU STRAP HIM IN. I HOPE HE JUDGED RIGHT ABOUT THE DISTANCE AND LOCATION OF CHOLORS!



FAREWELL, MY DARLING... THOUGH YOU BELIEVE IN YOUR STRANGE PLANET OF NO DEATH, I FEEL THAT THIS IS TRULY THE END...



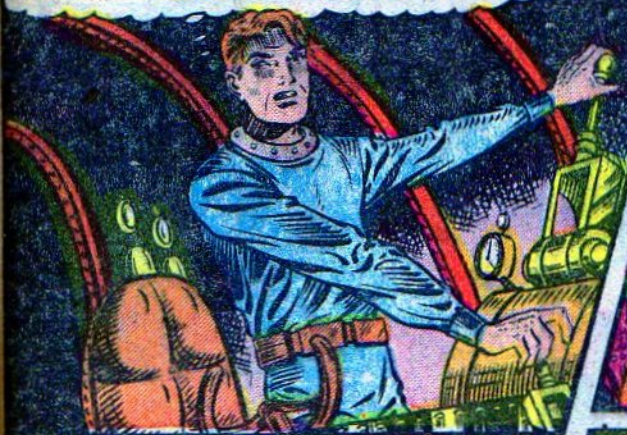
THERE SHE IS! THE GREEN PLANET! NOW IF I CAN ONLY HOLD OUT TO REACH THERE! PERHAPS I'VE JUST BEEN KIDDING MYSELF ALL ALONG... I WAS NEVER CERTAIN OF HUMAN BEINGS EXISTING THERE... WHAT'S THIS? SOMETHING I'M UNPREPARED FOR! WEAPONS DIRECTED AT ME! SO THERE IS LIFE OF A FORM HERE!



HIS STRENGTH STILL EBBING FROM HIM, KIP GRANT FACED A NEW HELPLESSNESS WITH HIS CRAFT BUFFETED ABOUT IN THE UNEXPECTED BARRAGE OF DEADLY MISSILES...



ONE GAMBLE TO MAKE IT, BUT THERE'S NO CHANCE TO NAVIGATE... I'LL HAVE TO CRASH-LAND! I SUPPOSE I HAVEN'T GOT MUCH TO LOSE ONE WAY OR ANOTHER... MY TIME WAS UP BEFORE I TOOK THIS TRIP!



THE SUPER-VEGETATED SOIL PROVIDED A YIELDING CUSHION, THEREBY PREVENTING COMPLETE DISINTEGRATION OF THE ROCKET SHIP, AS A DEATH-LIKE SWOON OVERTOOK ITS PILOT...



THE EARTH CREATURE! WE WATCHED HIS FLIGHT! WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH HIM?

NONE FROM ANY OTHER PLANET IS WELCOME HERE!



HALT! DO NOT HARM THE EARTH-MAN! THERE ARE NO WEAPONS ON HIS CARRIER! PERHAPS HE HAS SOMETHING TO OFFER US!





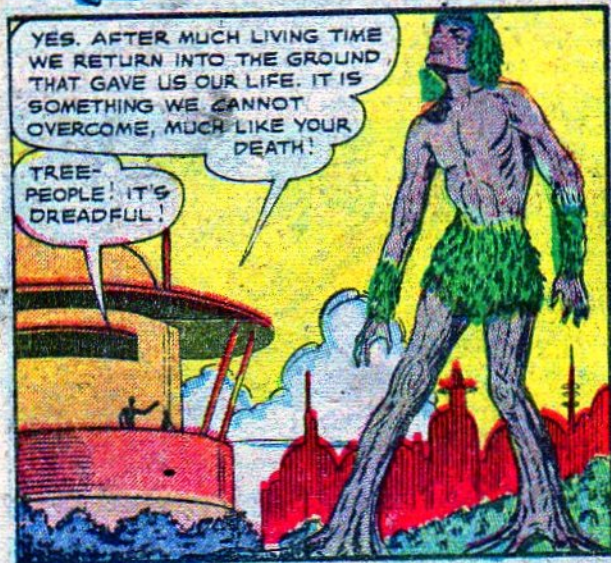
GREETINGS. I AM JADO. YOU WERE TAKEN FROM YOUR CARRIER. I THOUGHT YOU WOULD NEVER OPEN YOUR EYES!

FOR A GOOD REASON, JADO! I WAS DYING! BUT I FEEL FINE NOW! IT'S TRUE... THERE'S NO DEATH HERE?



NO. THERE IS NO EARTH-LIKE DEATH AS WE HAVE STUDIED FROM YOUR PLANET. STILL WE DO NOT EXIST FOREVER IN MORTAL FORM. LOOK!

W-WHY, THOSE PEOPLE ARE ROOTED TO THE GROUND JUST LIKE TREES! TELL ME, WERE THEY ONCE MORTAL?



YES. AFTER MUCH LIVING TIME WE RETURN INTO THE GROUND THAT GAVE US OUR LIFE. IT IS SOMETHING WE CANNOT OVERCOME, MUCH LIKE YOUR DEATH!

TREE-PEOPLE! IT'S DREADFUL!

RIP GRANT HAD ARRIVED ON CHOLORS AND WAS SNATCHED FROM THE JAWS OF DEATH ONLY TO FACE A GRIMMER DESTINY... LIFE EVER-LASTING IN THIS SEMI-VEGETABLE FORM WAS A THING OF TERROR!



WHAT CAN BE DONE TO AVOID SUCH A FATE, JADO?

THERE IS NO ESCAPE FROM CHOLORS... FOR ANYONE!



THAT IS WHY MY PEOPLE ATTACK ROCKETS THAT SEEK TO LAND HERE... TO PROTECT STRANGERS!

EARTH-MEN DON'T GIVE UP SO EASILY, JADO! I'M GOING TO LEAVE THE GREEN PLANET AND I'M TAKING YOU WITH ME.



MY CARRIER ISN'T AS DAMAGED AS I EXPECTED! I'M CERTAIN WE'LL BE ABLE TO GET IT TO FLY AGAIN!

MY PEOPLE WOULD ROOT ME BEFORE MY TIME IF THEY CAUGHT ME TRYING TO DESERT CHOLORS!

SOON THE ROCKET SHIP
QUIVERS FROM THE
CONCUSSION OF ITS OWN
DETONATION AND NOSES
UPWARD... SURPRISED BY
SUCH A MOVE, THE
PEOPLE OF CHOLORS
ARE UNPREPARED TO
ATTACK THE ESCAPERS...

THEIR HAND-OPERATED
RAY GUNS CANNOT HARM
US AT THIS DISTANCE, JADO!
DON'T LOOK SO WORRIED!

I AM A STUDENT OF
EARTH-NAVIGATION-
SPACES. IT IS BEST
IF I CONTROL THE
CARRIER, KIP!

GO TO IT! THIS
IS BETTER THAN
I EXPECTED!
DON'T YOU NEED
ANY CHARTS?

WHERE
ON THE EARTH-
PLANET DO YOU
CHOOSE TO
LAND?

THERE'S AN
AIRSTRIIP DOWN
THERE ON MY
OWN PROPERTY.
I'LL SHOW YOU
WHEN WE
DESCEND
LOWER...

WITH SPLIT-SECOND
PRECISION THE GIRL
FROM THE PLANET
OF NO DEATH BROUGHT
THE ROCKET-SHIP
DOWN TO EARTH
UNDER KIP'S
GUIDANCE... HIS
HEART LEAPED
WITH EXCITE-
MENT AT THE
SIGHT OF HIS
OWN HOME!

MARY! MARY,
DARLING! IT'S
KIP! I'M HOME!

KIP! OH, I MUST
BE DREAMING!
CAN IT REALLY
BE TRUE?

I CAN HARDLY
BELIEVE ALL THIS!
W-WHO IS SHE,
DEAR?

THIS IS JADO. BUT
FOR HER, I'D PROBABLY
STILL BE ON HER
PLANET... CHOLORS!

IT WAS DECIDED A FEW DAYS LATER THAT KIP
WOULD RESUME HIS STUDY OF CHOLORS WITH
JADO'S ASSISTANCE... HE HAD A DRIVING URGES
TO LEARN MORE OF THE PLANET WHERE
DEATH TOOK ON SUCH A MYSTERIOUS COUNTER-
PART...

DON'T GO, MARY!
I'VE BEEN AWAY
FROM YOU TOO
LONG AS IT IS!
I WANT YOU BY
MY SIDE...

BUT I'M
OF NO
HELP
TO YOU,
KIP!

THE RENEWED
ACTIVITY AT
KIP'S LABORATORY
LEFT LITTLE
TIME FOR HIM
TO OBSERVE
JADO'S GROWING
RESENTMENT
TOWARD MARY...
JEALOUSY
CREATED
A STRANGE
TENSION
BETWEEN
THE PLANET
GIRL AND
HER EARTH-
BORN RIVAL...



WITHOUT THE ACCUSTOMED ATMOSPHERIC PRESSURE OF CHOLORS, JADO'S RAY-GUN WAS USELESS...



KIP'S STUDY OF CHOLORS PLANET WASN'T TO BE ABANDONED BECAUSE OF JADO'S CONDUCT, AND ONE DAY HE SAW A MOST UNUSUAL SIGHT...

JADO! LOOK! I THINK I'VE CONTACTED YOUR PEOPLE! THEY SEEM TO BE SENDING A MESSAGE!

IF I AM NOT RETURNED, THEY THREATEN AN EARTH-BOMBARDMENT. THEY HAVE WIDE RANGE WEAPONS THAT COULD DESTROY EARTH!

THAT'S WONDERFUL! IMAGINE GETTING A MESSAGE FROM ONE PLANET TO ANOTHER! IT'S HISTORY MAKING!

JADO LACKED KIP'S EXCITEMENT AS SHE OBSERVED THE PLANET'S ACTIVITY AND TRANSLATED IT INTO SIMPLE LANGUAGE... IT WAS A THREAT OF WAR!

DID YOU HEAR, MARY? THEY THREATEN WAR IF JADO IS NOT RETURNED! ISN'T IT THRILLING?

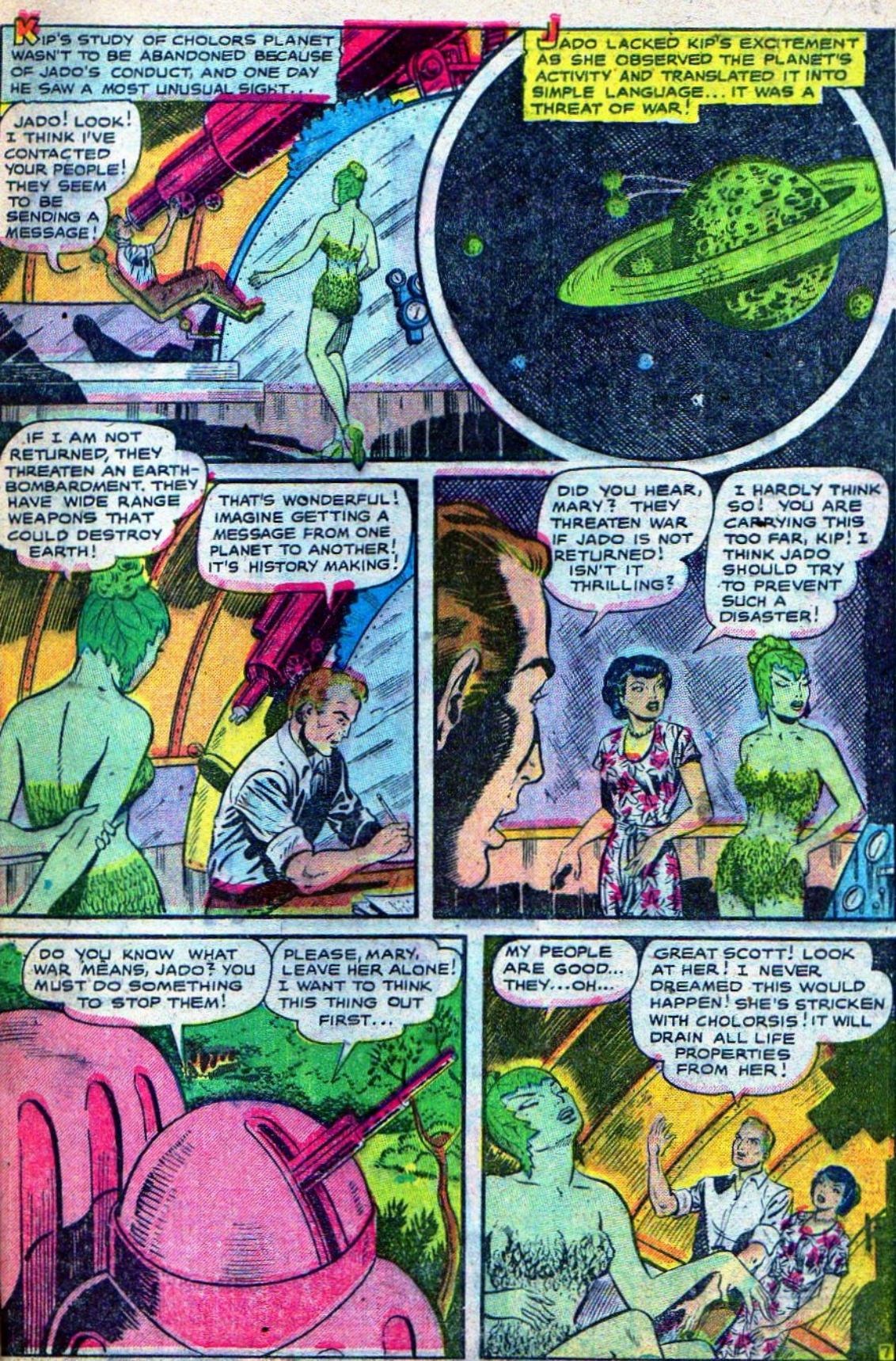
I HARDLY THINK SO! YOU ARE CARRYING THIS TOO FAR, KIP! I THINK JADO SHOULD TRY TO PREVENT SUCH A DISASTER!

DO YOU KNOW WHAT WAR MEANS, JADO? YOU MUST DO SOMETHING TO STOP THEM!

PLEASE, MARY, LEAVE HER ALONE! I WANT TO THINK THIS THING OUT FIRST...

MY PEOPLE ARE GOOD... THEY...OH...

GREAT SCOTT! LOOK AT HER! I NEVER DREAMED THIS WOULD HAPPEN! SHE'S STRICKEN WITH CHOLORSIS! IT WILL DRAIN ALL LIFE PROPERTIES FROM HER!



CHOLORS, WHICH BLEACHES VEGETABLE MATTER BEFORE IT RAPIDLY KILLS IT, HAD SEIZED THE PLANET GIRL AND SHE FACED UNESCAPABLE EARTH-DEATH...

WHY HAVEN'T I PAID CLOSER ATTENTION TO HER? SHE MUST HAVE BEEN FADING DAILY... AND I NEVER NOTICED!

YOU MUST DO SOMETHING, KIP!

SHE'S BEEN LONELY AND UNHAPPY HERE! SHE MUST BE RETURNED TO HER OWN PLANET!

YOU'RE RIGHT! COME WITH ME, MARY AND WE'LL PREPARE THE ROCKET SHIP, THEN GET HER INTO IT AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE!



IS SHE STILL ALIVE, KIP?

YES, WE MADE IT IN GOOD TIME! SHE'LL BE ALL RIGHT ONCE SHE HITS THE STRATOSPHERE!

HER PEOPLE WILL WELCOME HER... THEY MIGHT EVEN THINK I TOOK HER DOWN HERE AS A PRISONER!

FAREWELL, LITTLE JADO... PERHAPS WE WILL MEET AGAIN SOME DAY!



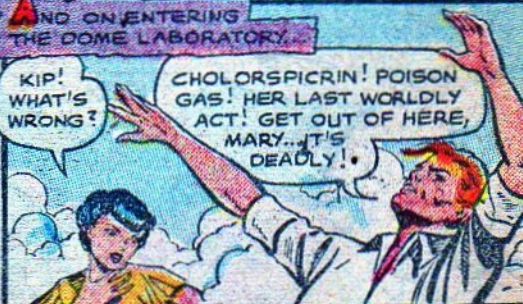
LET'S GET BACK TO THE LAB, MARY, PERHAPS WE CAN WATCH HER FLIGHT...

OH, KIP, I WISH YOU'D FORGET ABOUT THE PLANET OF CHOLORS! I DON'T THINK WE WERE EVER MEANT TO KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT IT!

AND ON ENTERING THE DOME LABORATORY...

KIP! WHAT'S WRONG?

CHOLORSPICRIN! POISON GAS! HER LAST WORLDLY ACT! GET OUT OF HERE, MARY... IT'S DEADLY!



ALL RECORDS OF CHOLORS, THE GREEN PLANET, WHERE DEATH TAKES ON STRANGE FORMS, WERE DESTROYED IN THE LAST FEW MINUTES A CHOLORS MAIDEN SPENT ON EARTH... IT WAS HER FINAL JUDGMENT THAT THE TWO PLANETS WERE NOT MEANT TO JOIN IN SCIENCE... AND WHO CAN SAY THAT SHE WAS WRONG, FOR SHE KNEW MORE OF BOTH PLACES THAN ANY LIVING MORTAL!

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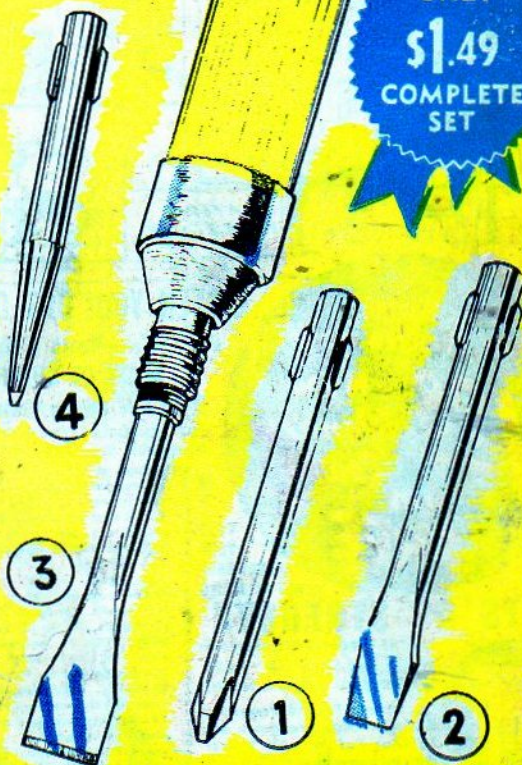
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